



# **Devon & Cornwall Police and Crime Panel**

## **31st January 2025**

### **Commissioner's Update Report**

#### **Safe, Resilient and Connected Communities Where Everyone Plays Their Part**

##### **Appointment of Interim Chief Constable**

At the end of November 2024 I received information in relation to the conduct of Acting Chief Constable Colwell that necessitated a mandatory referral to be made to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). I also took the decision to suspend Mr Colwell following this referral. Mr Colwell did not make any representation within the 7 working day response period and therefore he remains suspended pending the outcome of the IOPC investigation. In order to secure experienced and stable leadership for Devon & Cornwall Police I made an appointment to Mr James Vaughan QPM as an Interim Chief Constable for a one year period. I took this action with the support of the Chief Inspector of Constabularies, the College of Policing, the Home Office and the National Police Chiefs Council. This appointment was a direct award following an interview process and as it is not a substantive appointment the law did not require a confirmation hearing to the Police and Crime Panel. In order to ensure transparency of the process I convened an interview panel which included representatives from HMICFRS, the College of Policing, the Vice Chair of the Police and Crime Panel and an independent panel member (who met the criteria of the College of Policing Guidance). The Chair of the Police and Crime panel was also invited but was unable to attend. The appointment process was therefore conducted in the spirit of the formal guidance as the risk of operating the Devon & Cornwall Police without stable leadership was considered too great to delay. The outcome of this interview process was communicated to Police and Crime Panel members on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2024 immediately after the appointment was made.

##### **Resignation of Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner**

In December 2024 I accepted the resignation of Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner Mark Kingscote and he has now left the OPCC. In the time Mark had been with the OPCC he had made a significant contribution to the development and implementation of the priorities outlined in the Police and Crime Plan and completed extensive engagement activities with key partners. There are clear benefits from a business continuity perspective for employing a Deputy PCC and the additional value added from such a role has already been seen. At the present time I have not made

any decisions about when or if I will look to replace this role but anticipate doing so during 2025.

## **Hotspot Policing**

Hotspot policing continues to help tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) and serious violence through targeted foot patrols. Since May, more than 1,200 extra hours of patrols have been carried out by police, town centre officers and street marshals across Devon and Cornwall. While on patrol they engage with residents, visit businesses and proactively address ASB. Those patrolling are highly visible in town centres and have engaged with more than 5,400 members of the public to date. The times and locations of the patrols are data-led, placing officers in the right place at the right time. This has led to attendance at 87 ASB incidents and 21 arrests.

## **Street Focus Torquay**

The Street Focus: Torquay project continues to build on the progress made last year as our multi-agency initiative aims to bring real, long-term change to the town centre and enhance community safety.

After feedback from the community about some benches near the Castle Pub being an area of concern and attracting antisocial behaviour, they have now been removed.

Investments have been made in street cleaning, improving the appearance of the town centre. SWISCo, Torbay Council's waste management service, will also be working with the Community Payback scheme. Offenders will work on identified tasks to pay back the community for their crimes. This can include tasks such as litter picking, removing graffiti and grounds maintenance. Together, they will have a greater impact on maintaining clean, safe streets.

The mobile police station will be out and about again over the coming months in Torquay Town Centre. Members of the public are encouraged to visit, providing an opportunity to report crime, receive crime prevention advice, share information and be directed to support services. The van will be stationed at the following dates and locations, subject to operational demand:

- Monday 27 January, 10am – 1pm: outside Primark, Union Street
- Monday 3 February, 10am – 1pm: near to Green Ginger – The Strand
- Friday 7 February, 6pm – 8pm: near to Premier Shop on Fleet Walk
- Thursday 13 February, 2pm – 4pm: Castle Circus
- Friday 21 February, 12pm – 2:30pm: outside Primark, Union Street

My office produced a report for the Community Safety Partnership requesting Castle Circus be made a strategic investment area. We believe this will enable various partners to unlock barriers that are sustaining levels of ASB / Crime in the area. I am awaiting an official response.

## South Devon College Event



Pictured: Students at South Devon College

My team has been working with local police partners to engage with young people at South Devon College to present their ideas on how to address the issues in Torquay's town centre. Students were set a problem-solving challenge for Castle Circus. With just a few weeks to put together their presentations, the students conducted a visit to the area and carried out extensive research, including looking at case studies from as far away as Finland and the US.

There were six presentations, each heard by a panel with representatives from my team, Devon & Cornwall Police and Torbay Council. The presentations did not feature policing as a solution for Torquay. Instead, the students focused on fixing the root cause of some of the issues by providing accommodation, addressing alcohol and drug addiction through support services, revitalising disused shopfronts, and setting up youth clubs. The students were able to field some challenging questions from the panel.

## Award for CCTV Team Who Helped Catch Sex Attacker



Pictured: Megan Ward and the CCTV Control Room Staff

I recently visited Exeter City Council's CCTV Control Room to personally award one of the CCTV control room staff and their team with a commendation for their good work.

Megan Ward's work led to the arrest and conviction of a sexual offender. In November, Megan was praised by detectives for her 'diligent work' in tracking down a man following a sexual assault in the city centre.

The attack was captured on CCTV and operators from the Control Room managed to track the perpetrator as he fled across the city centre. However, he soon went out of frame and vanished.

More than a month later Megan was able to identify a male matching the description of the offender in the city centre and raised the alarm.

He was arrested by police and was recently jailed for the offence. This is a fantastic piece of work that shows the dedication and skills of those working in the CCTV control room.

## Operation Scorpion



As the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon, Cornwall, and the Isles of Scilly, I have the privilege of witnessing the incredible work our policing teams do to keep our communities safe. Recently, I was particularly impressed by the results of Operation Scorpion, a regional crackdown on illegal drug activity. This operation highlighted not only the great work of our police forces but also the crucial role we all play in safeguarding vulnerable individuals, especially children, from exploitation.

Operation Scorpion, now in its tenth iteration, is a collaboration between the five South West police forces and their partners. This year, the operation focused heavily on child criminal exploitation (CCE) — a devastating practice where children are groomed and coerced into carrying out crimes, often related to drug trafficking through county lines. The results speak volumes about the effectiveness of our united approach. Across Devon and Cornwall, 26 arrests were made, and 48 people, including 19 children, were safeguarded. Regionally, the operation resulted in 95 arrests, more than £47,000 in cash seized, and significant quantities of drugs, including 37kg of cannabis and 3.7kg of cocaine, taken off our streets.

These statistics are impressive, but the real impact lies in the lives changed. Each child safeguarded represents a young person pulled back from the brink of a dangerous path. Behind every arrest is a community made safer and a message sent loud and clear: the South West is no place for drugs.

Child criminal exploitation is an insidious crime that thrives in secrecy and manipulation. Gangs target vulnerable young people, enticing them with gifts, money, or a sense of belonging, only to trap them in a cycle of fear and control. Once recruited, these children are often subjected to threats and violence, making it nearly impossible for them to break free on their own.

This is why the safeguarding element of Operation Scorpion is so critical. Alongside enforcement actions, officers conducted educational activities in schools, held awareness stalls in busy community spaces, and carried out welfare checks for vulnerable adults and children. These efforts are essential in not only identifying those at risk but also in educating the wider community about the warning signs of exploitation.

The Children's Society provides invaluable resources on recognizing the signs of exploitation in young people. You can find more information at <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/lookcloser>.

Operation Scorpion's success is only achievable thanks to the power of partnership. Working together, the five South West police forces, the British Transport Police, the South West Regional Organised Crime Unit, and our respective offices of Police and Crime Commissioners have shown what's possible when we pool our resources and expertise. By creating a hostile environment for drug dealers and organised crime groups, we're making it clear that exploitation and illegal drug activity have no place in our region.

### **Work to Support Police Misconduct Hearings**

Police and Crime Commissioners have very specific legal responsibilities in respect of police misconduct hearings.

Police officers who are subject to allegations of gross misconduct have their cases heard through a formal misconduct hearing. It is one of my statutory responsibilities to convene a panel of appropriate individuals to these hearings to assist the chair in reaching a conclusion. This is a recent change in the Police Conduct Regulations.

Each panel is comprised of two members of the public - known as Independent Panel Members - and a Legally Qualified Person. Each panel review all the evidence related to the alleged misconduct and advise the chair on whether they assess gross misconduct to have occurred.

The outcomes of misconduct hearings can range from no further action, to written warnings, to immediate dismissal without notice. It is absolutely imperative that only the right people work in policing and those that fall foul of the standards expected are dealt with swiftly and efficiently.

I want to thank the 24 Independent Panel Members and 14 Legally Qualified People who I employ to assist me with these matters. It is with their hard work and dedication that these processes are able to take place. This has however added an additional cost burden of £210K.

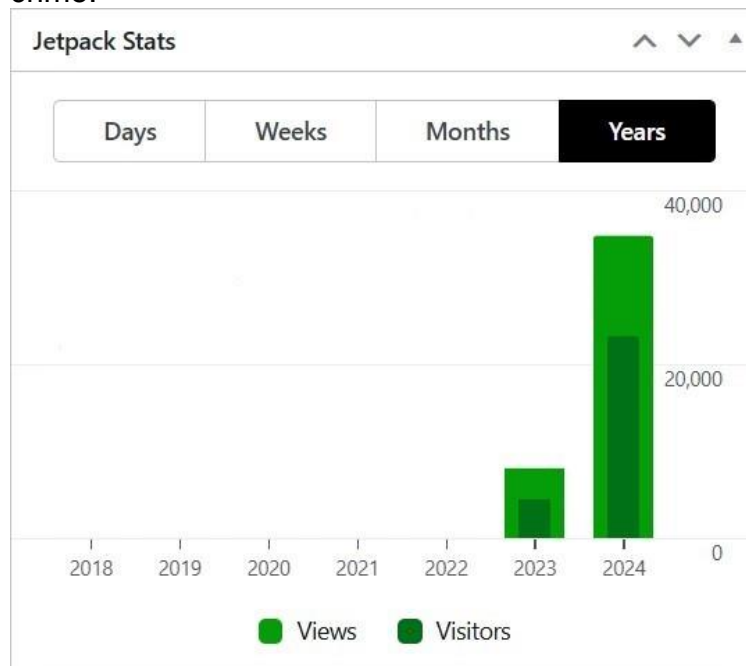
In the 9 months from April to December 2024, my office has supported 10 gross misconduct hearings, with a further 5 expected to take place between January and March 2025.

## Growing Audience of Our Victim Care Website

Thanks to a very successful social media advertising campaign on Facebook and TikTok, the Victim Care website run by my office to support victims of crime has seen a significant increase in views and visitors.

In 2024 the site received 34,770 views and 23,261 visitors, an increase on 2023 of more than 400% and 500% respectively. The advertising on TikTok is reaching an audience mostly under the age of 35 (78%) and on Facebook mostly over the age of 35 (97.6%).

Reaching the younger demographic of Devon and Cornwall has long been a challenge and I'm pleased to see that more young people are being made aware of the services available to them to help them cope and recover after experiencing crime.



## Local Criminal Justice Board

The members of the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) met in December to focus on how we can work together to address our current challenges and to discuss the progression of our agreed priorities set at the annual planning day in September 2024. As I shared with you in my last report, we will continue to concentrate on ensuring we have an efficient and effective criminal justice system, that we work together to keep victims engaged to secure justice and to address disproportionality. We have already commenced work which will focus on youth justice and planning has begun to review the criminal justice partnership response, impact and learning across all agencies within Devon and Cornwall following the large-scale disorder that we saw in August 2024. The Board will next meet again in March 2025.

## **Focusing on Youth Justice**

This priority is being overseen and driven by a strategic lead from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and supported by key representatives from the criminal justice system who are working together to improve timeliness, quality of diversion and to consider what good service looks like for all children involved - whether a suspect or victim. Whilst this work is in the early stages, I am really encouraged by the collective efforts of the group to embed a 'child first' approach across the wider criminal justice partnership. They recognise that the youth justice system should treat children as children, seeing the whole child, including any structural barriers they face and focus on better outcomes for children. It is understood that diversion, if delivered well, can be an effective crime reduction strategy to keep our children, their families and the community safe. Progress will be presented at future board meetings and I look forward to sharing with you the improvements as a result of their combined professional approach.

## **Criminal Justice Scrutiny**

The role of undertaking scrutiny across the criminal justice partnership for Out of Court Resolutions (OoCRs) and to assess quality of compliance with the Victim Codes of Practice (VCoP) has become an established process with at least one panel being held each month against an agreed theme. I am pleased to report that panels continue to be well supported by the criminal justice partnership with positive engagement from all key stakeholders who together consider what our agencies are doing to make a difference, how we work together to learn and improve, and to develop policy and practice. The most recent Child OoCR panel held on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December looked at cases relating to offences of criminal damage. Observations from the panel included the achievement of positive engagement with interventions and effective multi-agency and partnership working to address offending behaviour between the Police the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The scheduled Adult OoCR panel for January 2025 will review drug possession offences.

I look forward to working with the Hampton Trust as they establish the programme across Devon and Cornwall, working closely with the police and our existing domestic abuse victim services providers across the area.

## **Commissioning Intentions Plan**

Each year I publish a commissioning intentions plan, which is included in today's meeting as part of the budget papers, is a document that sets out how I will support the prevention & reduction of crime and help victims to cope and recover from the harm they have suffered.

My commissioning intentions plan for 2025/26 details the range of existing and new commissioned services I have planned to support the delivery of my statutory duties.

Supporting victims to cope and recover remains the focus of all commissioning activity, however, commissioning investments also support core policing activity and



priorities such as reducing reoffending and prevention. The full plan is included as part of my budget update. Once agreed the plan will be published on our website.

### **Westcountry Women's Awards**



Picture: Jeanie Lynch of CoLab being presented with her award

Last year, for the third consecutive year in a row, I was delighted to sponsor the Combatting Violence Against Women and Girls Award at the Westcountry Women Awards 2024. This awards event celebrates the achievements of women in the West Country, recognising their outstanding contributions to various fields and their positive impact on the community.

The Combatting Violence Against Women and Girls Award provides the opportunity to highlight the outstanding work that is being delivered, the support services that are available and to thank those who work tirelessly, outside of their day-to-day role, in combatting this area of crime which of course is one of my policing priorities.

My office received a record number of applicants with 28 (this has grown significantly, with 13 last year and 16 the year before). There were many strong applicants and after a heavy sifting process, it was decided (with the support of the event organisers) that there were two clear winners due to their outstanding contributions; Dawn Dines from Stamp out Spiking and Jeanie Lynch from CoLab.

Many of you will have heard of Dawn who has worked over decades in raising awareness and the prevention of drink spiking which often leads to violent crime. Dawn works both regional and nationally with many partners including delivering training to police officers and those in the nighttime industry on how to support and prevent this crime.

Our second winner was Jeanie for her work at CoLab, a multi-agency wellbeing community hub in Exeter. Jeanie has been leading since 2017 on strategy, services, and support for women in Exeter experiencing multiple disadvantage and complex needs many who are at hands of perpetrators of violence.

The award night, a gala dinner event, was held on Thursday, November 28, 2024, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Plymouth, and was attended by a record number of 360 people.

## Police Complaint Reviews

Complaints from members of the public to Devon and Cornwall Police are handled in accordance with The Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020. Since February 2020, a complainant has the right to apply for a review of the outcome of their complaint through the appropriate mechanism.

As part of my duty, on behalf of the public, to hold the Chief Constable to account, I share the legal responsibility with the Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC) for undertaking reviews for complaints against Devon and Cornwall Police. This is a significant statutory responsibility for which I have a full-time dedicated team of experts. If it is determined that the complaint outcome is not reasonable and proportionate, the review is upheld, and my team may make recommendations to the Force to rectify matters.

I welcome the opportunity to review the concerns the public have about the way in which Devon and Cornwall Police handles complaints. It provides me with valuable feedback about how the police are performing and how services need to change to respond to the customers' needs.

## Summary of Police Complaint Reviews February 2020 - December 2024

SUMMARY OF POLICE COMPLAINT REVIEWS					
Reporting Year	Requests Received	Invalid Request	Full Reviews Completed	Reviews upheld	% Upheld
2019 - 2020 (Feb-Mar)	5	0	0	0	0
2020 - 2021	136	21	66	18	27.3
2021 - 2022	167	43	126	30	23.8
2022 - 2023	129	37	117	40	34
2023 - 2024	131	28	80	37	46.25
2024 - 2025 (Apr - Dec)	87	23	90	39	43.33
<b>Total to Date</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>34.24</b>

## Out of Court Resolution Procurement Update

My office, working closely with colleagues in the police force and procurement have undertaken a tender process to identify a provider who will deliver interventions to perpetrators of domestic abuse, as part of a new out of court resolution process.

The Hampton Trust is the successful bidder and have been awarded a contract which will commence in April 2025.

From April police will be able to refer to Hampton Trust's Cautioning and Relationship Abuse (CARA) programme, which is an early intervention programme for standard risk, first time domestic abuse offenders who have received a conditional caution. The Hampton Trust has extensive experience of delivering this innovative, well evaluated programme which has been designed to support offenders in understanding what domestic abuse is, the harm their actions have caused, the impact this has had on their partners, children and relationships, and how to make different choices going forward and prevent these harmful behaviours from becoming more entrenched.

### **Joint Working with Partners to Commission Support for Victims of Sexual Violence**

My office has been working closely with partners (LAs, NHS, Experts by Experience, Support Providers) and there is agreement that the sexual violence support system is too complex, fragmented and hard for both victims and professionals to navigate. Complicated funding streams and increases in both demand and complexity mean the current system is not meeting the needs of victims, support providers or commissioners.

In recognition of these issues, and in order to maximise resource and efficiency, my office will pool funding with other statutory partners including local authorities from October 2025 to recommission services in a new way, improving victims' access to specialist sexual violence support.

A new model will improve waiting times by ensuring people's needs are better understood, avoiding them being added to waiting lists for costly therapy which may not be the most appropriate support. This will free up capacity to ensure those with the most complex trauma are able to access help when they need it.

My Office will lead the commissioning and will work with partners to design and launch a tender process in the coming weeks for a new set of contracts to begin in October 2025.

### **December Councillor Advocate Seminar**

On Monday, December 2, 2024, I met with approximately 40 councillor advocates online for the fourth and final seminar of the year. These events provide councillors with an opportunity to hear about policing priorities, updates on community policing and support services for victims of crime.

At this seminar, councillors received an update on the commissioning budget for 2025-26, and presentations on the final Police and Crime Plan 2025-29 as well as Criminal Justice and You, a multimedia resource for victims and witnesses launched by my team last year.

The ACC for local policing gave an update on local policing and councillors were given an opportunity to ask questions during and after the event.

Dates have been sent to councillor advocates for all four seminars to be held in 2025, as I hope to encourage further attendance. You can sign up for the scheme here: [Councillor Advocate Scheme – Your voice in policing](#)

## **Youth Survey**

I spoke previously about my Young Voices in Policing survey which is aimed at understanding the challenges facing young residents of Devon and Cornwall in relation to crime and policing.

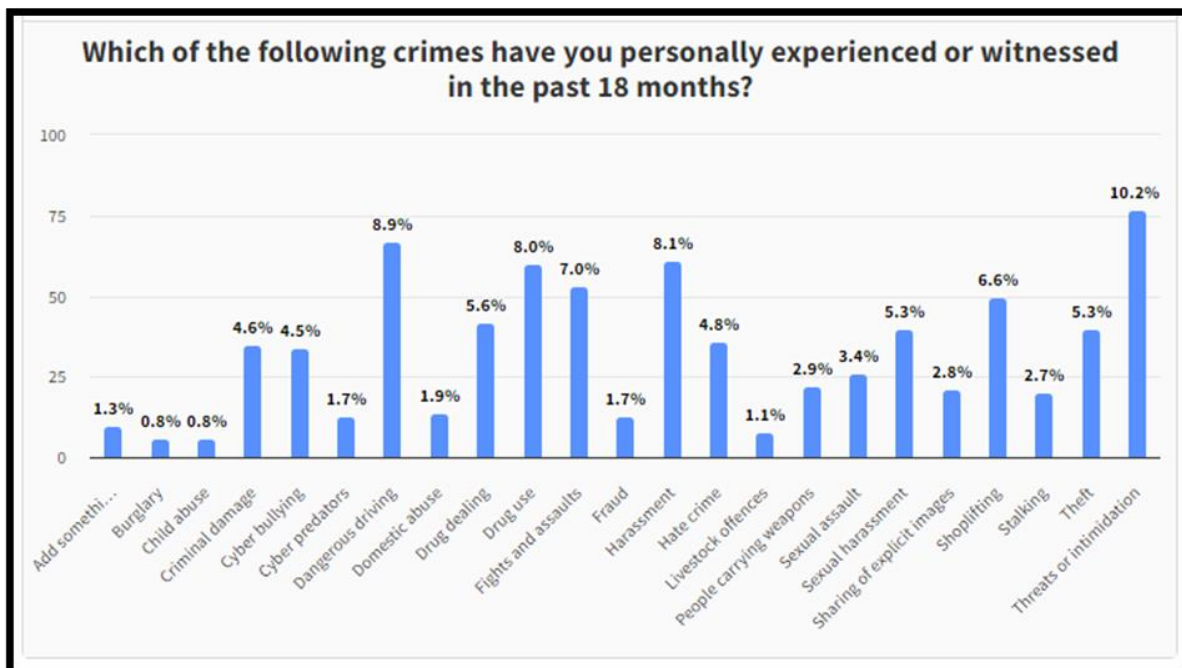
A total of 25 schools and colleges were contacted by my office in June 2024. Six took up this opportunity and to date I have completed four visits, with one further visit scheduled for next month. In total I have spoken to nearly 200 students plus many members of staff during these visits.

I have visited South Devon College in Paignton to talk to criminology and law students, Colyton Grammar School to speak to those on the Citizenship course, Tavistock College for those on the Uniformed Protected Services course and Duchy College in Callington for those on the MaPS Military and Protective Services course. I hope to meet students from Petroc College in Barnstaple next month and this will complete these visits.

As well as the schools and colleges I visited, my team also visited Plymouth University and Boardmasters Festival in Newquay as part of this campaign.

I am pleased to report that 323 people aged 16 to 25 have now taken part in this survey which asks a series of questions around how safe the respondent feels in the force area, the level of confidence they have in police, what types of crime they have experienced and their levels of concern relating to alcohol and drugs.

Results have shown that 52% are aware of where their closest Police Enquiry Office is, 35% are concerned about drugs and 26% are concerned about alcohol use in their age group. I also learnt about a range of crimes that have been experienced over the past 18 months with the highest percentage being threatening or intimidating behaviour (10.2%), closely followed by dangerous driving (8.9%), harassment (8.1%) and drug use (8%) (see graph below).



Following my visit to the four colleges and schools, 92% of the students told me that they felt more informed about my role as Commissioner, 76% felt better informed about the role of the police and my office has received requests for various further information on issues such as Police Enquiry Offices, police officer recruitment, Crimestoppers, police cadets victim services and better understanding of the policing budget (see image below).

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Police Enquiry Offices	22.73% 5
Police staff or officer recruitment	63.64% 14
The work of the Commissioner and her office	18.18% 4
Becoming a local councillor	13.64% 3
Becoming an MP or politician	27.27% 6
Helping your community to keep it safe	36.36% 8
Victim services	36.36% 8
Crimestoppers	18.18% 4
Understanding the police budget	36.36% 8
How you can have an influence on policing in Devon and Cornwall	27.27% 6
The police cadets	18.18% 4
Total Respondents: 22	

The survey will now close while I look to evaluate the results.

I am also pleased to have taken the results of the Cornwall Councils make Your mark youth crime survey into the formal governance of policing. Cornwall Council were proactive in sharing this survey with me and the feedback from young people on their

feelings of safety in Cornwall will be used to help shape future service delivery. This report specifically highlights Camborne and Redruth as a crime and safety concern for young people.

## **Serious Violence**

This reporting period will see the formal disestablishment of Devon and Cornwall's standalone Serious Violence Prevention Programme, as it nears the end of its intended four-year programme on 31st March. As I've outlined in previous updates, much has been achieved in this time, leaving a legacy of innovative, evidence-based practice within the local government realm that will evolve further to reflect local need. In short, tackling violence both in public places and behind closed doors will continue to form one of my Police and Crime Plan priorities. Since the programme's inception the government have introduced the new serious violence duty for Local Authorities and their partners, and my office now only has a convening role for serious violence locally.

My office will now take a combined policy and partnership approach to criminal justice and youth violence prevention, via a dedicated new OPCC function under the Local Criminal Justice Board remit. I welcome this development and I will continue to oversee the peninsula's strategic response to violence and ensure regional compliance with the national Serious Violence Duty.



### **Alison Hernandez**

Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

### **Contact for further information:**

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Report prepared on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025.